

A study of attitude towards equality for women among undergraduate students and its relationship with their perception about dowry taking

Dr. Shitole S.K.^{1*}, Ms. Potnis V.², Ms. Kamble S.³, Mr. Sonule B.⁴, Ms. Budake P⁵

ABSTRACT

The current research studies various aspects of attitude towards equality for women among undergraduate students and its relationship with their perception about dowry taking. A random sample of 240 (120 Males and 120 Females) is chosen for this study from Kolhapur district (Maharashtra, India). Two standardized tests - Rama Tiwari's 'Equality of Women Attitude Scale' and R. Sharma's 'Dowry Attitude Scale' - are used. In case of Dowry Taking, both Males and Females have shown negative attitude. The mean and standard deviation score for Males (N = 120) is M = 195.88 and SD = 29.54 while for Females (N = 120), it is M = 202.81 and SD = 26.23. The t-value $t(238) = 1.92$, $p = .06$ has shown that there does not exist any statistically significant difference between them. In case of Equality of Women Attitude (EOWA), the mean and standard deviation score for Males (N = 120) is M = 71.19 and SD = 5.82 and the mean and standard deviation score for Females (N = 120) is M = 73.65 and SD = 4.23. The value for independent samples-t is $t(217.27) = 3.74$, $p = .001$. It has shown statistically significant difference between Males and Females and the mean score for Females is significantly higher than Males. The researchers have also calculated the correlation coefficient between Dowry Taking Attitude (DA) and Equality of Women Attitude (EOWA) for both, Males and Females. The significant and positive correlation between Attitude against Dowry and Equality of Women is observed in both groups. The r-value for Females is $r = .38$ ($p = .01$) and is comparatively higher than the r-value for Males, $r = .26$ ($p = .01$). The qualitative data is also collected through semi-structured interviews of 24 participants (12 Males and 12 Females), which constitutes 10 percent of the total sample. The themes focused in interviews are factors responsible for change in perception about dowry system, various new forms of exchanges during marriage, awareness of legal safeguards against dowry related crimes, measures to be taken especially at college level to enhance gender equality and anti-dowry outlook etc. Finally, researchers have suggested thrust areas for sensitizing undergraduate students regarding ill effects of Dowry Taking and fostering gender equality for better society.

¹Mahavir Mahavidyalaya, Shivaji University, Kolhapur, Maharashtra, India

²Mahavir Mahavidyalaya, Shivaji University, Kolhapur, Maharashtra, India

³Mahavir Mahavidyalaya, Shivaji University, Kolhapur, Maharashtra, India

⁴Mahavir Mahavidyalaya, Shivaji University, Kolhapur, Maharashtra, India

⁵Mahavir Mahavidyalaya, Shivaji University, Kolhapur, Maharashtra, India

*Responding Author

Received: July 09, 2020; Revision Received: August 21, 2020; Accepted: August 23, 2020

A study of attitude towards equality for women among undergraduate students and its relationship with their perception about dowry taking

Keywords: *Dowry Taking, Equality of Women, Sensitization programmes for gender equality*

Indian constitution has explicitly recognized that there should not be any discrimination based on sex, caste, creed and religion. The successive governments have launched various affirmative plans and actions with relevant legal safeguards such as reservations in education, public employment and local self-government, schemes for backward communities etc. Though it has helped to enhance equal opportunities for women in India, the micro-level gender audit still points out that the primary life choices of women and their execution are controlled by men in a major way. All caste, creed and religions communities show agreement about this dominance of men over women for better society. At family level, working women are respected only if they take proper care of all family members and home duties. At professional level, even if they show talent and performance, they are given secondary roles. They face glass ceiling effect. Social networks, interactions and particularly male-friend circles of women are looked upon negatively by parents as well as spouses.

Among various forms of gender discrimination, exercising the dowry system during marriages in India is very serious form. It treats women as subordinates and burdensome creatures. In contemporary India, apart from the traditional forms, many new forms of exploitation like demanding luxurious goods and facilities, destination wedding expenditure etc. are emerged. The bride is tortured or harassed mentally and physically for non-compliance of demands by husband or in-laws. The most shameful fact is that the highest number of deaths related to dowry in the world is recorded in India. Since 2000, the rate of dowry death is constantly increasing and 18233 dowry death cases were reported in National Crime Record Bureau Report of 2012. The ratio of dowry deaths is about the same as the ratio of population in India by religions. The Dowry Prohibition Act and other related legal mechanisms have proved to be ineffective in curbing the dowry deaths.

To curb such discriminatory practices for progressive India, the efforts for gender equality which treat Women as Humans should be strengthened. The institutionalized gender sensitization programmes, especially for undergraduate students are need of the hour. Researchers have therefore decided to study the attitudes of undergraduates towards equality for women and towards dowry taking and suggest areas of focus for gender sensitization programmes.

Statement of the problem

A study of attitude towards equality for women among undergraduate students, its relation with their attitude towards dowry taking and to suggest unique thrust areas for effective Gender Equality and Anti-Dowry Sensitization Programmes at educational institutes.

Objectives of study

1. To study the difference between undergraduate males and females regarding Dowry Taking Attitude.
2. To study the difference between undergraduate males and females regarding Attitude towards Equality for Women.
3. To study relationship between Attitude towards Equality for Women and Attitude towards Dowry Taking among undergraduate males.
4. To study relationship between Attitude towards Equality for Women and Attitude towards Dowry Taking among undergraduate females.

A study of attitude towards equality for women among undergraduate students and its relationship with their perception about dowry taking

5. To suggest unique focus areas for effective Anti-Dowry Sensitization Programmes and Gender Equality Sensitization Programmes for undergraduate students at educational institutes.

Hypotheses

1. There is a significant difference between undergraduate males and females regarding Attitude against Dowry Taking.
2. There is a significant difference between undergraduate males and females regarding Attitude towards Equality for Women.
3. Positive Attitude towards Equality for Women is related significantly to positive Attitude against Dowry Taking among undergraduate males.
4. Positive Attitude towards Equality for Women is related significantly to positive Attitude against Dowry Taking among undergraduate females.

METHODOLOGY

Variables and their operational definitions

Dowry Taking Attitude: It is the quantitative score attained by participant on 'Dowry Attitude Scale' (DAS) developed by on R. Sharma. Higher score connotes positive attitude against Dowry Taking while lower score connotes positive attitude towards taking dowry

Equality for Women Attitude: It is the quantitative score attained by participant on 'Equality of Women Attitude Scale' (EOWAS) developed by Rama Tiwari. Higher score connotes positive attitude towards Equality for Women while lower score connotes negative attitude towards Equality for Women.

Undergraduate Learners: Male and Female participants who are pursuing degrees through higher education institutions affiliated to universities in India.

Sex: It is a categorical variable describing gender of the participant. The two categories are there named as Males and Females.

Participants and Sample

Initially a random sample of 252 is taken from different higher education institutes in Kolhapur district, Maharashtra, India. All participants are undergraduate learners who are pursuing their degrees from these institutes affiliated to universities. After scrutinizing and cleaning the data, 12 participants are cancelled. The reasons for cancellation are incomplete information, choosing more than one alternatives for a statement and not responding to few statements. The final sample for the study is thus 240. Among them, number of Males is 120 and number of Female participants is 120.

Tools

Two standardized tests are used for the current research. The details are as follows:

1. **Rama Tiwari's 'Equality of Women Attitude Scale':** The scale is paper pencil test and consists of forty statements related to different aspects of dowry taking behaviour in Indian context. Every item has two responses i.e. 'Yes' and 'No' out of which respondent has to choose one. The split-half reliability coefficient for the scale is .94. The content validity coefficient of the scale is .89.
2. **R. Sharma's 'Dowry Attitude Scale':** This scale consists of fifty-two statements and it is a paper pencil self-report measure. It has used five-point Likert scale for response. The options available to respond are 'Completely Agree', 'Agree', 'Not

A study of attitude towards equality for women among undergraduate students and its relationship with their perception about dowry taking

Sure', 'Disagree' and 'Completely Disagree'. The reliability of this test is calculated by using split-half method and the coefficient is .79. The validity is derived through comparing it with other equivalent tests and the coefficient is .89.

Procedure and Research Ethics

The researchers have approached the heads of different higher education institutes in Kolhapur district. They explained them the importance of research topic and requested to allow their students to participate in research. After taking permission of the heads, researchers brought participants in a spacious room. Every participant is allotted one desk in classroom and a brief introduction about the research is given. It is assured to all participants that the information gathered through the research will be used only for academic research purpose and will be kept confidential forever. The two tests with answer-sheets are provided to them. The demographic details are first filled. After establishing good rapport, the instructions are given clearly in simple and lucid language. Researchers made sure that the instructions are understood by participants. They explicitly instructed the participants to raise their hands in case of any doubt or query regarding any statement in the scales during response phases. There was no time limit to solve the scales but participants are requested to complete it as early as possible. Generally, to solve both scales, 35 minutes are enough. After completion, all material provided to participants is taken back.

In next phase, semi-structured interviews of 24 participants (12 Males and 12 Females), which constitutes 10 percent of the total sample, are taken. The areas focused in interviews are the causes of changing perceptions about dowry system and its various forms, awareness of legal safeguards against dowry related crimes, importance and relevance of gender equality, the measures to be taken especially at college level to enhance gender equality and anti-dowry outlook etc.

Statistical Analysis (Quantitative and Qualitative)

The gender-wise classification of answer-sheets is done and code is given to each participant. The data is cleaned and 12 doubtful samples are cancelled. Thus, the final sample for the study is 240 (120 Males and 120 Females).

The Microsoft Excel sheet is created in Microsoft Excel 2013 software and all data is filled properly. The sheets are made ready for statistical treatment. The statistics used for this research is mean, standard deviation, independent-t test and product moment correlation. The statistical treatment is carried out in SPSS 18 version.

The qualitative analysis of responses to two scales given by participants and the responses obtained from semi-structured interviews is also conducted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Analysis

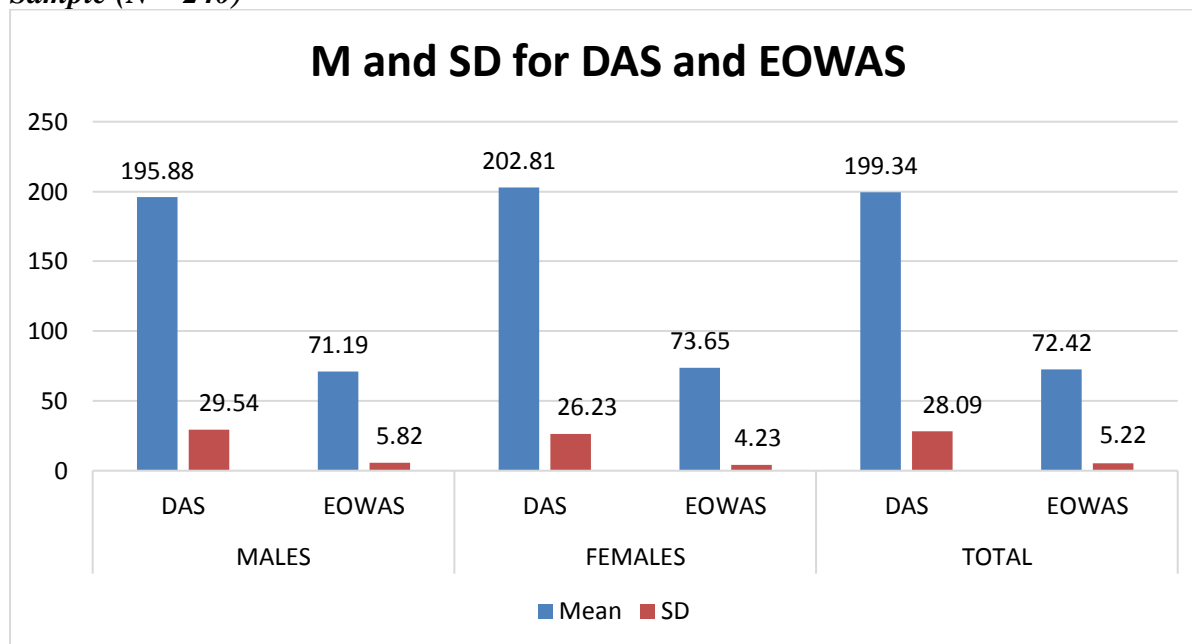
Table 1: Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD), Degree of Freedom (df) and t-value for Dowry Attitude (DA) and Equality of Women Attitude (EOWA) for Males (N = 120) and Females (N = 120)

Factors	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-Value
Dowry Attitude (DA)	Males	120	195.88	29.54	238 #	1.92 (<i>p</i> = .06)
	Females	120	202.81	26.23		
Equality of Women Attitude (EOWA)	Males	120	71.19	5.82	217.27 ##	3.74 * (<i>p</i> = .001)
	Females	120	73.65	4.23		

Equal variance assumed ## Equal variance is not assumed

*Significant at .01 level

Graph 1: Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) for Dowry Attitude (DA) and Equality of Women Attitude (EOWA) for in case of Males (N = 120), Females (N = 120) and Total Sample (N = 240)



As Table 1 shows, the mean score for Males ($N = 120$) on Dowry Attitude Scale (DA) is $M = 195.88$ ($SD = 29.54$). By comparison the mean score for Females ($N = 120$) on Dowry Attitude Scale (DA) is $M = 202.81$ ($SD = 26.23$) is numerically higher (Graph 1). To test whether these mean scores for Dowry Attitude are statistically significantly different or not, an independent sample t-test is performed after checking for assumption of homogeneity of variance through Levene's F-test. The Levene's values is $F(238) = 2.29$; $p = .13$ which is non-significant. **The t-value $t(238) = 1.92$, $p = .06$ has shown that there does not exist any statistically significant difference between Males and Females regarding Dowry Attitude (Hypothesis 1). Thus, in this research Hypothesis 1 is not verified.**

It is a welcome change that not only females but males have also shown equal concern about the dowry-taking practice which is bad for society. Their inclination towards treating bride family on equal footing is observed through responses. They are against commodification of

A study of attitude towards equality for women among undergraduate students and its relationship with their perception about dowry taking

females. They think that marriage is not an economic transaction but it is a human bond to enrich life and families.

In case of Equality of Women Attitude (EOWA), Table 1 shows that the mean score for Males ($N = 120$) is $M = 71.19$ ($SD = 5.82$) and the mean score for Females ($N = 120$) is $M = 73.65$ ($SD = 4.23$) which is numerically higher than Males (Graph 1). The independent sample t-test is performed for testing the significance of this statistical difference. The assumption of homogeneity of variance, which is tested through Levene's F-test, $F(217.27) = 7.001$; $p = .009$, is found to be significant. Therefore, the degrees of freedom (df) is corrected accordingly and the t-value without assuming equal variance is taken for comparison between mean scores. The value of independent samples $t(217.27) = 3.74$, $p = .001$ can be seen in Table 1. **It has shown that there exists statistically significant difference between Males and Females regarding Equality of Women Attitude (EOWA) and the mean score for Females is significantly higher than Males (Hypothesis 2). Thus, the present research verified Hypothesis 2.**

Though males and females have shown equal concern against dowry taking behaviour, in case of gender equality, female undergraduates have shown significantly higher sensitivity than male undergraduates. The 'gender equality' is a broader concept which touches every aspect of human life. Biological differences should not become a barrier for value of equality. It is to be exercised in social, economic as well as political life which is predominantly male dominated. The responses given to the statements in scale have shown that the struggle for females is somewhat different than for males to exercise this value in real life. Males muse fight with one's own stereotypical and yet socially supported attitudes of possessing power over different types of resources, leadership and economic rights etc. They must leave these means of oppression and give women their due share through inclusion and equality of opportunity. It is quite difficult for them and will take time. Another peculiar perception is observed through interviews of males. Males have a concern that educated females are more demanding and individualistic which may lead to maladjustment in family. So, they seemed to have somewhat reserved outlook about giving equality in practice, though principally agreed with it. On the other hand, responses given by female graduates have shown that, due to education, they have become more assertive in claiming their rights. They are vocal about injustice. Though age-old structure of family has certain advantages, they are not ready to accept secondary roles now. They want to change patriarchy which doesn't allow their talent to grow. They want 'say' in decision making in social as well as professional life. They want to crack glass ceiling. They want to use various mass media tools and participate in the organized efforts made by different organizations and activists to raise their voices against gender inequality.

Table 2: Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD) and Correlation coefficient (r-value) between Dowry Attitude (DA) and Equality of Women Attitude (EOWA) for Males (N = 120), Females (N = 120)

Groups	Factors	N	Mean	SD	r-Value
Males	DAS	120	195.88	29.54	.26* ($p = .01$)
	EOWAS		71.19	5.82	
Females	DAS	120	202.81	26.23	.38* ($p = .01$)
	EOWAS		73.65	4.23	

***Significant at .01 level**

A study of attitude towards equality for women among undergraduate students and its relationship with their perception about dowry taking

Graph 2: Correlation coefficient (r-value) between Dowry Attitude (DA) and Equality of Women Attitude (EOWA) for Males (N = 120), Females (N = 120)

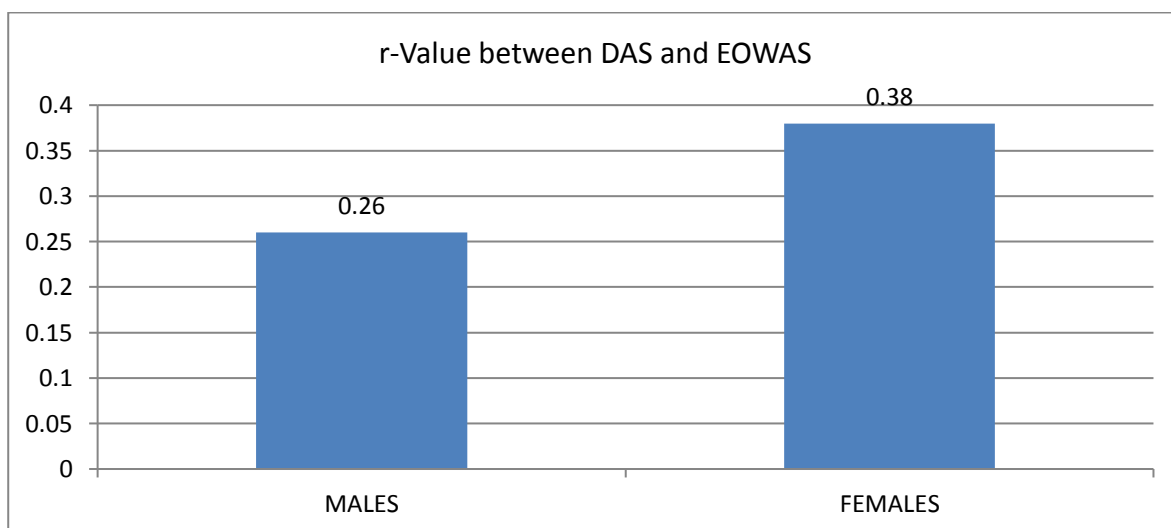


Table 2 has shown the correlation between Dowry Attitude (DA) and Equality of Women Attitude (EOWA) for both Males ($N = 120$) and Females ($N = 120$). **Here the important thing to be seen is the design of the scale and scoring procedure mentioned in the manuals. In case of Dowry Attitude, as the score increases, the attitude towards dowry becomes negative while in case of Equality of Women Attitude the increase in score leads to positive attitude towards gender equality.** In current research, from Table 2, it can be seen that the mean scores for Dowry Attitude (DA) for both groups (For Males, $M = 195.88$, $SD = 29.54$ and for Females, $M = 202.81$, $SD = 26.23$) are on higher side which connotes that the participants have shown negative attitude towards dowry! The mean scores for Equality of Women Attitude (EOWA) for both groups (For Males, $M = 71.19$, $SD = 5.82$ and for Females, $M = 73.65$, $SD = 4.23$) are also on higher side which connotes that the participants have shown positive attitude towards gender equality. **Thus, significant and positive relation between Attitude against Dowry and Equality of Women Attitude is observed for both groups. The r-value for Males is $r = .26$ ($p = .01$) (Hypothesis 3) and the r-value for Females is $r = .38$ ($p = .01$) (Hypothesis 4) (Graph 2). Thus, both Hypotheses (3 and 4) are verified in this research.** Also, this correlation in case of Females is comparatively higher than the correlation in case of Males.

From the above result, irrespective of gender, those who prefer ‘to be human’ and ‘to treat others as humans’, have shown significantly positive correlation between equality for women and attitude against dowry because taking dowry is a clear and strong manifestation of unequal treatment for women! Weak attitude may not translate into behaviours but strong attitudes are exhibited through behaviours. Dowry taking is a manifestation of strong stereotype to accept the norm that women are commodity and have a secondary role in life. Showing attitude against dowry by both male and female undergraduates in this sample is a positive step towards equality. Females have shown stronger correlation than males. If such is the case then ‘why the dowry related crimes are on the rise?’ is the obvious question which may be raised by experts. According to current researchers, it may be due to the awareness of women and their families about the legal safeguards provided against dowry. Rather than tolerating oppression, now they are approaching machinery of law for justice.

A study of attitude towards equality for women among undergraduate students and its relationship with their perception about dowry taking

The crimes in past are not registered and so the number of crimes though high are not seen in record books previously but nowadays, women are showing courage to register complaints so the number is on higher side than previous records.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis also supported the quantitative analysis and has given deeper insights. Both Male and Female undergraduate students have either experienced at home or observed in neighbourhood or read from media, the ill effects of dowry on women and their families. Dowry-taking practice has shaken the self-worth and dignity of females and their parents. The economic and psychological health of these families is disturbed. The crime against women for dowry is described as inhuman and the need to fight against this dowry system is equally emphasized by these participants. The learned women, if given proper opportunities, will become an asset not only of family but also of nation. The productive contribution of nearly half of the population is not actualized due to the social norms of inequality. The participants are of the view that the time has come to break these stereotypes about women and allow their capacities to flourish in social, economic, political, sports etc. Due to experiences of gender discrimination, females seem to be more vocal than males though both have shown positive attitudes towards gender equality. Males have also cautioned females that the rights should be exercised with balanced outlook and males should not be seen as enemies or competitors. This fight is for human justice and it should be fought together by males and females and not against each other.

CONCLUSIONS

1. There is a no significant difference between undergraduate males and females regarding Dowry Taking Attitude. The higher group mean scores have shown that both have similar attitude against Dowry Taking.
2. There is a significant difference between undergraduate males and females regarding Attitude towards Equality for Women. Females have inclined more towards equality of women than males.
3. Positive Attitude towards Equality for Women is related significantly to positive Attitude against Dowry Taking among undergraduate males.
4. Positive Attitude towards Equality for Women is related significantly to positive Attitude against Dowry Taking among undergraduate females.

SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions for Thrust Areas given by undergraduate participants to foster Gender Equality and Anti-Dowry Attitude

Another objective of taking semi-structured interviews is to take inputs from undergraduates which will prove helpful in designing sensitization programme to curb the dowry related crimes and foster gender equality.

Following are the important suggestions given by undergraduate participants, which will be helpful, especially at school and college level:

Programme Officer for Gender Equality at School and College Level

Like, NSS and NCC units, a permanent Programme Officer for Gender Equality should be appointed in each school and college. He/she will be given professional training in attitudinal change and socio-psychological processes required to bring gender equality among students. Various programmes and practices are to be carried out throughout year by

A study of attitude towards equality for women among undergraduate students and its relationship with their perception about dowry taking

this unit like expert lectures on constitutional and legal mechanisms related to gender equality, dowry related crimes and punishments, street-plays, poster presentation, essay-writing competitions, interviews of survivors and activists etc.

Introducing Gender Sensitivity Indicators in Academic Audit

These indicators can be tuned with sustainable development goals set by United Nations. It may include reduction in eve-teasing, curbing direct or indirect physical and mental harassment of females, effective implementation of anti-ragging laws, providing physical amenities such as toilets, rest rooms, sanitary pads etc. Efficient mechanisms to provide the benefits of various schemes to females under affirmative actions by governments can be another parameter to evaluate the performance of institute and thereby rewarding it.

Advocacy mechanism for Sex education and Family values

Due to spread of information technology and internet, sex related problems of youth are on the rise. The misinformation about sex through pornography is showing disastrous effects. Proper sex education and its relation with satisfactory and dignified life is necessary. Schools and colleges are the safer places to give it. The experts are easily made available there and teachers have long-term contact with students. They can counsel students whenever necessary.

Capacity-building training for Females

New India is facing 'lack of skill-based personnel' problem. If youth are provided proper skills for livelihood, it will make them not only independent in economic sense but also enhance their self-confidence. It will in turn lead to make them alert about injustice and raise equality. The skill-based courses and initiatives with local focus can be developed with outcome-based indicators in higher education institutes. The autonomy should be given to colleges in this regard.

Using IT for security

Nowadays almost every college going student has smartphones. This gadget can become an empowerment tool for safety and security of females. The 24 by 7 helpline service related to protection of women, counselling for gender related issues can be made available. A special 'application' for smartphone can be developed by college to give such first-aid to their students.

REFERENCES

- Aklawat Sumitra (2014). Women's attitudes towards Dowry System in India. *International Journal of Enhanced Research in Educational Development*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, Jan.-Feb., 2014, pp: (31-34)
- Corinne H Rocca, Sujit Rathod, Tina Falle, Rohini P Pande and Suneeta Krishnan (2008). Challenging assumptions about women's empowerment: social and economic resources and domestic violence among young married women in urban South India. *International Journal of Epidemiology* 2009; 38:577-585
- Dang G., Kulkarni V. and Gaiha R. (2018). Why Dowry Deaths Have Risen in India? *ASARC Working Paper*.
- Document of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2016). Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality 2016-2020: Making Business Transformative: Creating Opportunities for All.

A study of attitude towards equality for women among undergraduate students and its relationship with their perception about dowry taking

- Ghani E., Kerr W., O'Connell S. (2012). What Explains Gender Disparities in India? What Can Be Done? <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2012/09/27>
- India Celebrating Team. Gender inequality in India. <https://www.indiacelebrating.com/>
- Osch Thera van (2017). Strategies to promote Gender Equality. *Workshop on 'Gender and Development'*. ISPI – Milan, 2017.
- Sharma R.R. (2006). Manual for Dowry Attitude Scale. *Ankur Psychological Agency, Lucknow*.
- Sharma Ratika (2015). Gender Inequality in India: Causes and Remedies. *International Research Journal of Management Sociology & Humanity*. Vol 6, Issue 8.
- Sharma Smriti (2016). Achieving gender equality in India: What works and what doesn't. Articles in partnership with UNU-WIDER and EconFilms on responding to crises worldwide. Available Online at <https://theconversation.com>.
- Tiwari Rama (1988). Manual for Equality of Women Attitude Scale. *Agra Psychological Research Cell, Agra*.
- United Nations Report (2018). Strategy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2018–2021). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Vienna, 2018*

Acknowledgements

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Shitole S.K., Potnis V., Kamble S., Sonule B. & Budake P (2020). A study of attitude towards equality for women among undergraduate students and its relationship with their perception about dowry taking. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 8(3), 470-479. DIP:18.01.057/20200803, DOI:10.25215/0803.057